

Writing Policy

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1. Our vision for writing

Attitudes to writing are so important and this lies at the heart of our approach to writing at Hillstone. Whenever children write, it is purposeful and they know what it means to be successful. Furthermore, our curriculum is designed such that learning happens in manageable steps, with plenty of opportunities for children to master particular knowledge and skills so that these become automatic and accurate when they are writing. We aim for our children to leave Year 6 enjoying writing and being able to write effectively and creatively for a range of purposes and audiences.

2. Writing in Early Years

Just as with reading, there are key skills that need developing before children begin to work on what many of us would think of as writing. Children must have good fine motor skills. We provide lots of opportunities for the children to practise these skills in order for them to have the strength and dexterity to hold and use a pencil. Speaking and listening are also crucial – a child needs to be able to say something before they can write it.

When children are ready, we begin teaching them how to form their letters, making use of the rhymes provided by the Read Write Inc. phonics scheme to help children remember these. We focus carefully on exactly how children form their letters (in other words, whether they are starting the letter in the right place and moving the pencil the correct ways after that) rather than whether it simply looks right once it has been done.

We teach them how to use their phonics skills to help them spell many words, but also teach them that some words are tricky to spell using phonics, so need to be learnt in a different way. Obviously, not all words will be spelt correctly to start with, but we praise children for applying their phonics knowledge.

It is important that children understand that writing is a way of recording our thoughts and sharing them with others, so before children are ready to write their own sentences, adults will sometimes scribe their ideas for them.

Although writing is ultimately a creative and expressive activity, as our Early Years children are still very much in the throes of developing their handwriting and spellings skills (known as transcriptional skills) at

this point, much of the writing they do will be based on words and ideas we provide for them so that they can focus on building those key transcriptional skills.

3. Writing in Key Stage 1

Children develop their handwriting and spellings skills across the week in discrete sessions, via Read Write Inc phonics and as part of other lessons, including those focused on writing.

Whilst children are still learning to read via Read Write Inc. Phonics, they receive writing lessons in small focused groups. These sit outside of the phonics programme. Teachers design these lessons to that the content the children are writing about is readily accessible to them – often it will be linked to a picture book they have read.

Once children have completed our phonics programme, their main writing lessons are structured in the same way as those in Key Stage 2 – please see the Key Stage 2 section below for more detail.

Children develop their sentence-writing skills, learning how to write longer sentences and how to make sure their sentences follow on from one another. We also work on their writing being effective by choosing their words carefully. Finally, they learn to write in different ways, such as stories (to entertain), instructions (to instruct) and accounts of what they, or someone famous has done (to recount what happened).

4. Writing in Key Stage 2

Having started learning to join in Year 2, children learn to join their handwriting consistently and quickly whilst in KS2. However, this does not mean having to join together every single letter in every single word! Phonics still plays a big part in children's spellings, but more rules and patterns are also introduced, as well as further 'key words' for each year group. As they move through KS2, they will expand their range of sentence structures and learn how to use a greater range of punctuation. They will learn to be increasingly mindful of the reader – this idea informs how we teach the writing curriculum, with us explaining why cohesion and paragraphs are so important by referring back to the reader's experience.

Children's writing becomes increasingly sophisticated as they become more aware of the different ways we write depending on who we are writing for and why, and learn to write for a wider range of purposes than in KS1. They also begin to blend together a range of purposes in a piece of writing – for instance, a set of instructions might be prefaced by a persuasive introduction, designed to entice the reader to want to follow the instructions in the first place.

Proofreading (checking for, and correcting, errors) is worked on in every year group, but as children get older, we also expect more of them in terms of editing their work, which is all about making their writing more effective for the reader.

Our learning documents (further down the page) detail the specifics of what is learnt each year.

To ensure consistency, which we know drives excellent attainment and progress, we use one approach to writing in KS2, known as our Hillstone Writing Journey. It incorporates a whole range of activities known to help children become enthusiastic and effective writers.

5. Writing for all

Some children are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) in writing. What they focus on in writing lessons will be driven by what their class teacher, in coordination with our SEN Coordinator, identifies as the most important next steps for their learning.

In turn, this may mean that they work on a different task from the rest of the class or receive targeted support during the lesson. In addition, extra time during the week may also be spent working on this area with the child in what we refer to as interventions.

Other children are identified as being gifted and talented in writing. The class teacher will identify ways in which to suitably challenge them in writing.

6. Assessing writing

Our progression map details the skills and knowledge against which children are assessed. Teachers make use of this assessment information to guide the learning and experiences that each and every child receives. Whilst teachers understand the importance of the knowledge and skills sitting on our progression map – and the learning that can be done to work on each of these – they also appreciate that quality writing is about more than the sum of its parts. As such, they assist children into effectively blending a range of elements into their writing and help children – especially in the upper part of Key Stage – develop their writer voice and sense of choice as a writer.

7. Links with home

Children are asked to practise spellings at home and often handwriting too. Families are provided with resources and information to help with this. We share children's writing with families, both on paper and electronically.